



**Rachel Carson Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 9th, 2014, 6p**

LAC Members	Affiliation/Interest	Present
Mr. Perry Barrow	Community Member	No
Mr. Charles Burgess	Town of Beaufort	No
Ms. Ann Carter	Community Member	No
Mr. John Fussell	Community Member	Yes
Ms. Margaret Garner	Community Member	Yes
Chief Steve Lewis	Beaufort Police Department	Yes
Mr. Randy Newman	Fort Macon State Park	No
Ms. Robin Newton	Reserve Volunteer	Yes
Dr. Dan Rittschof	Duke University Marine Lab	Yes
Mr. Stanley Rule	Community Member	Yes
Mr. Ben Wunderly	North Carolina Maritime Museum - Beaufort	No
Others in Attendance		
Paula Gillikin	DCM, Central Sites Manager	
Kate Brogan	DCM, Communications Specialist	
Daphne Littiken	Public	
Luke Gruber	Public	

Reserve Update (Paula Gillikin)

Administrative Update

Staffing News

John Fear, Research Coordinator with the Reserve, left the program in January to become the Deputy Director of N.C. Sea Grant and Water Resources Research Institute. The vacant position was posted in March and the Reserve anticipates filling the position in late spring.

Budget

The NCNERR will receive \$593,000 from NOAA for operation of the program during next fiscal year, up \$xx from last year.

The FY15 President's Budget includes \$21.300 million for the entire National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS); this is level with the FY14 Omnibus appropriation for the NERRS.

The FY15 President's Budget proposes closing the NOAA Beaufort Laboratory to strengthen its coastal science in the long run and reduce its physical footprint and fixed costs. The State has not yet taken a position on the proposed closure.

Actual language for your information: To strengthen NOAA's coastal science in the long run, NOAA proposes to reduce its physical footprint and fixed costs by closing the Beaufort, N.C. laboratory and consolidating the Charleston, S.C. lab with the Hollings Marine Lab, which is also located in Charleston.

Management plan update status

The NCNERR is beginning to update its management plan with a proposed completion date of December 2015. Stakeholder input is an important part of this process as we plan for the next five years (2016-2021) and the local advisory committees are key stakeholders. Staff is developing the stakeholder engagement process currently and this, including when and how the committees will be utilized, will be shared with the committees via email in Summer 2014.

LAC committee membership

Original community member (Perry, Ann, John, Dr. Dan) terms expire in Dec, open application period in the fall. Think about re-applying. If there are particular user groups or perspectives that are not well represented on a given committee, feel free to encourage those folks to apply in the fall.

Site Update - Old Business (Paula Gillikin)

- The foot/entryway to the Carrot Island boardwalk has been difficult for visitors to access. To address this, a section of the railing on the side of the Carrot Island boardwalk was removed and now allows visitors to easily and safely access the boardwalk.
- At the previous LAC meeting, members were concerned about the potential increase in visitation due to the impending Park Service sole contract ferry service. Ferries who currently operate at Cape Lookout National Seashore make transition their business to the Rachel Carson Reserve. Paula explained how the Reserve wishes to understand the level and types of commercial use at the site by working directly with the users. The Reserve will continue to provide updated site and program information to local businesses (including commercial users), annually.

Site Update - New Business (Paula Gillikin)

- Education activities at the site since April 2013, included volunteer-led public field trips (116 participants), summer camps (111 participants), general outreach programs (187 participants), and K-college field trips (600 participants).
- Volunteers removed over 524 pounds of marine debris from the site.
- Camera monitoring was conducted at the main horse water hole to better understand how visitors use the area. Data reveals that it may be appropriate to post signs around this critical habitat to keep visitors from entering.
- Initial results of a dog study indicate 12% leash compliance.
- Volunteers and staff performed various bird surveys throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Oystercatcher productivity was higher than in recent years past. Seabird Ecological Network (SEANET) surveys continued throughout the year every two weeks. These surveys document beached birds and data is submitted to a database that houses SEANET data from the entire east coast.
- Staff and volunteers conducted a habitat accuracy assessment in the field to verify current habitat maps that were produced using aerial photography.
- Reserve intern, Forrest Kraus, carried out a diamondback terrapin survey project to test the feasibility of conducting rapid population assessments at night. More testing is needed to determine whether or not this method is appropriate for estimating terrapin populations. However, the study revealed that night-time captures of diamondback terrapins is feasible, as they turtles are briefly stunned in the water when spotlighted.
- There are current 33 feral horses on the island. One horse is showing signs that a visitor or visitors have been feeding him (illegal). Reserve staff are conducting behavior assessments of the horse to better understand the level of habituation. Signs that mirror the Park Service's new horse education/enforcement signs may be pursued for the Rachel Carson Reserve to deter visitors from inappropriately interacting with the horses.
- A "reggae barge party" was held at the site on June 22, 2013. Two bands on two barges drew a large crowd. Residents were upset and contacted Paula Gillikin. Regulatory staff from the Division of Coastal Management contacted the organizer to ensure that the barges were promptly removed.
- The nature trail improvement project is almost complete. A self guided interpretive brochure has been printed and will be available at the trailhead and through businesses who take passengers to the site.
- The Army Corps of Engineers completed a small dredging project at the east end of Taylor's Creek on July 22nd, 2013. Several thousand cubic yards of sediment were deposited in a cell on the east end of Carrot Island. Efforts were made to protect the fresh pond in the dredge cell, as horses rely on it for fresh water. However, it was contaminated by salt water during dredging operations. The Corps responded by mostly dewatering the area and providing a supplemental source of fresh water for the horses.

Member Roundtable and Other Comments

- Members are very concerned that commercial use will significantly increase when one ferry company (as opposed to the multiple providers that currently provide service) starts providing

service to Cape Lookout National Seashore. This will occur in the Spring of 2014. Members suggest that one or more businesses will shift their activities to the Rachel Carson Reserve and the Reserve should take proactive steps (some type of authorization, tracking, or permitting system) to manage commercial use.

- Members agree that the main horse water hole is a critical habitat and needs to be protected by signs to keep visitors out. Signs made by school children (following the model of Audubon's Masons Inlet bird nest protection) interspersed with regulatory signs would likely be more effective than regulatory signs, alone.
- Members inquired if there is enough fresh water available to the horses, currently. Paula explained that there is plenty of food and water available to the horses, partly because the herd size is much smaller than it was when resources were scarce in the 1980s/90s.
- It is concerning that management issues (dogs off leash and public nudity) are occurring with no enforcement. Members agree that [pcg1] the Beaufort Police Department should be engaged in a formal way (scheduled patrols) to address visitor use issues. Although Paula and Perry are willing to take the police to the island when an issue arises, this usually does not work out due to multiple factors.
- In response to the reggae barge party, members suggested that the Reserve should determine whether or not this kind of activity is appropriate and if not, regulate it.
- Members discussed the challenges of visitors using the trailhead area as a bathroom.

Public Comments

- None

Action Items

- Reserve staff to discuss idea to making a formal request to the Town for law enforcement assistance during higher visitation periods.
- Reserve staff will continue to work on better understanding commercial use at the site.
- Paula will contact the committee to schedule a spring meeting date.
- Paula will begin the process of procuring signs to delineate the horse water hole.